

# Kim Campbell

Secretary General of the Club of Madrid

CLASS OF 1983



Kim Campbell holds a BA and an LL.B. from UBC, pursued doctoral studies in Soviet government at the London School of Economics and has six honorary doctorates. She is the Secretary General of the Club of Madrid ([www.clubmadrid.org](http://www.clubmadrid.org)), an organization comprised of former heads of government and state who work to promote democratization through peer relations with leaders of transitional democracies. An Honorary Fellow of the Center for Public Leadership at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, a Senior Fellow of the Gorbachev Foundation of North America and a member of the International Council of the Asia Society of New York, Campbell has also been the Canadian Consul-General in Los Angeles and Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders. Her political memoir, *Time and Chance*, was a bestseller.

If Kim Campbell was not meant to be Canada's Prime Minister for long, it is nevertheless evident that she was meant to be Prime Minister.

"A lot of people worked very hard to make it possible... so you say to yourself, 'How can I use that political capital and that experience to open doors for other people?'" Campbell says, "I always wanted to try and make a difference. Even when I was a teenager, I wanted to be the first woman Secretary General of the UN. I always felt I wanted to make some contribution larger than my own life." Two avenues in particular always called her: "the advancement of women and the advancement of democracy."

"After I had political retirement thrust upon me," Campbell says with both emphasis and humour, "I read a lot of the very good

social science literature that's come out since the 1990s that really helps to explain why women find that being good at what you do isn't enough. By the time little boys and girls start school, they have very clear ideas of what it means in their society to be male and female. So when women break out and start taking on roles that have not traditionally been occupied by women... they're often seen not to belong. Even people who consciously articulate a philosophy of equality, at a visceral level, are troubled by that person. If you make anomalies of us, then you don't have to change your own basic preconception. But there's plenty more like me. I'm not an anomaly."

In her book, *Time and Chance*, Campbell recalls the story of a friend who saw two little girls playing "Kim Campbell and Hilary Clinton." She understands that we need – as individuals and as a society – to rehearse and play and pretend at something before we're ready to try a role on for real. "I keep saying to my American friends that maybe one of the best things going for a female presidential candidate is this television show, *Commander in Chief*, because what you have is a woman on TV doing the job of the president," Campbell says. "It can help to change people's sense of what is appropriate, what is natural, what is possible."

---

Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try,  
No hell below us, above us only sky,  
Imagine all the people living for today...

---

LAW SCHOOL

(sung to the tune of "Downtown")

There comes a day  
You find you have a BA  
And you know you don't care  
For law school.

That's when you learn  
That you're in no place to earn.  
Where do you go from there?  
Law school!

If your job was lousy  
But ambitions don't forsake you,  
And you're over 30  
So the Med School will not take you,  
Come right on in...  
Your future could  
Still be gold  
Because it's never too late  
And you're never too old to try

Law school!  
That's where we're headed,  
To law school!  
To be re-treaded at  
Law school!  
Where there's a new life for you.

— written by Kim Campbell for *How to Succeed in Law School Without Really Trying*, performed as part of the 1982 UBC Law Revue, and reprised in the *Hotel Vancouver Ballroom in a private performance December 12, 2005*

Campbell was the first woman to be Minister of Justice and the first to be Minister of National Defence and Veterans' Affairs. She was the first woman to be Defence Minister of a NATO country. She was the first woman to lead the Progressive Conservative party, and the first and still the only woman to be Prime Minister. When she announced her candidacy for party leadership in 1993, she said, "My goal has been not to define one single view of the world as it related to women, but simply to open the door to women, to say, 'Come on in, be a part of the cut and thrust of resolving issues and contending values in Canadian society. You don't have to agree with me. Come on in the door and fight with me. Tell me what you don't think I'm doing right. But be there as a first class citizen.' And that is my vision of citizenship in this country."<sup>1</sup> Her goal now is to keep all of those firsts, and everything they mean, visible to women, "not to aggrandize me but to prevent people from forgetting. With women, it's often easier to forget they were there, because then we don't have to change our world view."

Campbell's current full-time role grew out of a fall 2001 conference in Madrid on democratic transition and consolidation that brought together not only the world's leading scholars in the field but also 34 current and former heads of state and government. There was, as she says, instant chemistry. "The former leaders had a certain independence and reflective quality, and were quite open about talking about their experiences," she recalls, "and the current leaders were very interested to hear from them because they were often undergoing serious challenges and it was interesting for them to be able to sit and talk to people who had been there, done that. It was out of that that we got the idea that there might be a role for an organization that could bring former leaders together to share their experience with leaders trying to initiate the reform agenda necessary in a transitional democracy."

Campbell states more than once that she did not enjoy the practice of law, but that she loves being a lawyer, and that she found making law as Minister of Justice "lawyer heaven." "The rule of law is really the foundation of the democracy," she says simply. "It's more important than elections. A lot of the disillusionment that people have with democracy comes from countries where they get to vote every four years for the person who's going to rip them off. It's the rule of law that is the true constraint on the arbitrary use of power." She adds, "and the rule of law includes not just the existence of laws, but real, effective means of enforcement."

Working in the international arena—she takes 138 international flights a year—Campbell has been investigating means of enforcement of international norms. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour has convinced her of the power of domestic legal changes to influence the international sphere. "A woman politician from Chile said to me, 'How do we convince our men that they don't have the right to rape?'" Campbell recalls. "My hair sort of curled and went 'boing,' but I said to her at that time, 'There are international norms and standards, you know; you don't have to feel that you're alone in arguing for this.' Domestic law changes in progressive countries can very much help pave the way for changes in international norms, which can then help pave the way for changes in less progressive countries." She pauses: "I think the biggest challenge we face in international law is whether people are prepared to recognize the notion of supra-national lawmaking."

After the 1993 federal election, Campbell feared that her dream for democratic transformation in Canada was dead: "It seemed as if my whole life had been leading to this opportunity, and it had slipped through my fingers."<sup>2</sup> It's common in a time of great despair to forget that we'll live through it. And perhaps come to set our sights even higher. "For every devastating failure, there are real accomplishments in which I take pride," Campbell says. "Not only do they give me some comfort, they confirm my belief that individuals can make a difference."<sup>3</sup>

---

Imagine there's no countries, it isn't hard to do,  
Nothing to kill or die for, no religion too,  
Imagine all the people living life in peace...

---

<sup>1</sup> From *Time and Chance: The Political Memoirs of Canada's First Woman Prime Minister*, by Kim Campbell (Doubleday Canada Limited, 1996), p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell, p. 413.

<sup>3</sup> Campbell, p. 414.